Amendments to the Claims

1. - 16. (Canceled)

17. (Cancelled)

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus ~~as set forth in claim 18,~~ for making reinforcement ply material comprising an elastomeric sheet and a plurality of reinforcement elements embedded therein; wherein the reinforcement elements are grouped in untwisted sets and each set contains a plurality of reinforcement elements; wherein adjacent reinforcement elements in the same set are spaced apart an intra-set distance and adjacent reinforcement elements in different sets are spaced apart an inter-set distance; and wherein the inter-set distance is greater than the intra-set distance;

said apparatus comprising an extruder and a die head into which the extruder extrudes an elastomeric material;

wherein the die head defines a die throat and includes a guide insert which guides the reinforcement elements into the die throat;

wherein the guide insert comprises passages through which the reinforcement elements pass and which are arranged in a pattern corresponding to the arrangement of the reinforcement elements in the reinforced ply material;

wherein the guide insert includes a passage for each set of reinforcement elements and wherein the passages are laterally spaced from each other a distance corresponding to the inter-set distance; and

wherein the lateral distance between passages is between about 0.20 mm and about 0.50 mm.

20. (Original) An apparatus as set forth in claim 19, wherein the lateral distance between passages is between about 0.30 mm and 0.45 mm.

21. (Original) An apparatus as set forth in claim 20, wherein the passages are circular in cross-section shape.

22. (Currently Amended) An apparatus ~~as set forth in claim 20,~~ for making reinforcement ply material comprising an elastomeric sheet and a plurality of reinforcement elements embedded therein; wherein the reinforcement elements are grouped in untwisted sets and each set contains a plurality of reinforcement elements; wherein adjacent reinforcement elements in the same set are spaced apart an intra-set distance and adjacent reinforcement elements in different sets are spaced apart an inter-set distance; and wherein the inter-set distance is greater than the intra-set distance; said apparatus comprising an extruder and a die head into which the extruder extrudes an elastomeric material;

wherein the die head defines a die throat and includes a guide insert which guides the reinforcement elements into the die throat; and

wherein the guide insert comprises passages through which the reinforcement elements pass and which are arranged in a pattern corresponding to the arrangement of the reinforcement elements in the reinforced ply material.

wherein the guide insert includes a passage for each set of reinforcement elements and wherein the passages are laterally spaced from each other a distance corresponding to the inter-set distance.

wherein the lateral distance between passages is between about 0.30 mm and 0.45 mm; and

wherein the passages are rectangular in cross-section shape.

23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently Amended) An apparatus ~~as set forth in claim 23,~~ for making reinforcement ply material comprising an elastomeric sheet and a plurality of reinforcement elements embedded therein; wherein the reinforcement elements are grouped in untwisted sets and each set contains a plurality of reinforcement elements;

wherein adjacent reinforcement elements in the same set are spaced apart an intra-set distance and adjacent reinforcement elements in different sets are spaced apart an inter-set distance; and wherein the inter-set distance is greater than the intra-set distance;

said apparatus comprising an extruder and a die head into which the extruder extrudes an elastomeric material;

wherein the die head defines a die throat and includes a guide insert which guides the reinforcement elements into the die throat;

wherein the guide insert comprises passages through which the reinforcement elements pass and which are arranged in a pattern corresponding to the arrangement of the reinforcement elements in the reinforced ply material; and

wherein the guide insert includes a passage for reinforcement elements and the passages are grouped in sets corresponding to the sets of reinforcement elements, wherein intra-set passages are spaced apart a lateral distance corresponding to the intra-set distance, and wherein inter-set passages are spaced apart a greater lateral distance corresponding to the inter-set distance; and

wherein the distance between intra-set passages is between about 0.11 mm and about 0.13 mm, and wherein the distance between inter-set passages is between about 0.13 and about 0.23 mm.

25. - 34. (Canceled)

35. (New) An apparatus for making reinforcement ply material comprising an elastomeric sheet and a plurality of reinforcement elements embedded therein; wherein the reinforcement elements are grouped in untwisted sets and each set contains a plurality of reinforcement elements; wherein adjacent reinforcement elements in the same set are spaced apart an intra-set distance and adjacent reinforcement elements in different sets are spaced apart an inter-set distance; and wherein the inter-set distance is greater than the intra-set distance; said apparatus comprising an extruder and a die head into which the extruder extrudes an elastomeric material;

wherein the die head defines a die throat and includes a guide insert which guides the reinforcement elements into the die throat;

wherein the guide insert comprises passages through which the reinforcement elements pass and which are arranged in a pattern corresponding to the arrangement of the reinforcement elements in the reinforced ply material;

wherein the guide insert includes a passage for each set of reinforcement elements and wherein the passages are laterally spaced from each other a distance corresponding to the inter-set distance; and

wherein the passages are rectangular in cross-sectional shape.

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